

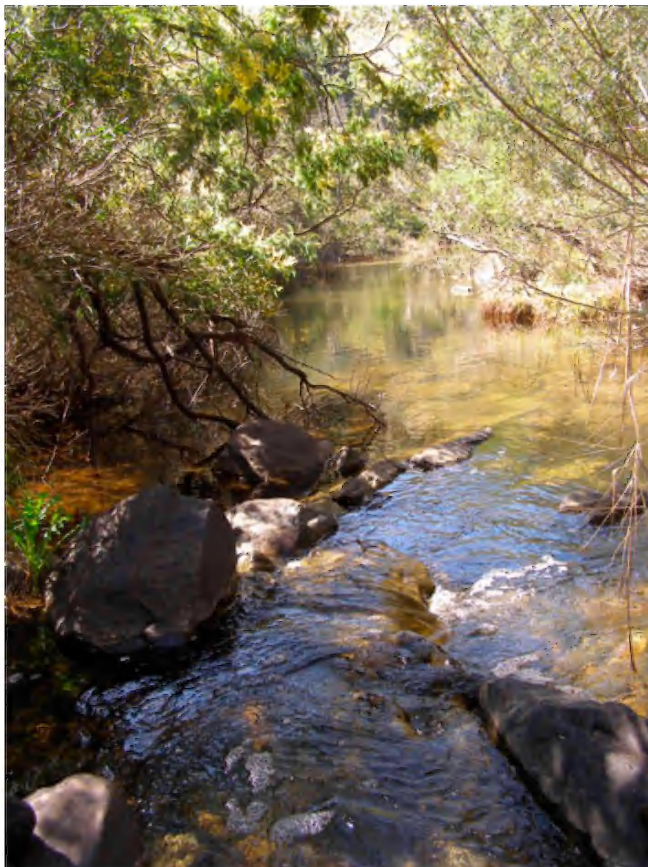
The Ballarat Naturalist

SEPTEMBER 2011



BRINGING MOORABOOL RIVER BACK FROM THE BRINK

Cameron Steele refers to himself as an accidental activist. He has become a passionate and articulate champion for the Moorabool River. On the 5th August, he gave us a fascinating insight into the battle to get a legislated environmental entitlement for the river and why it was needed. It is interesting to note that it was that week, for the first time in 15 years that the Lal Lal Reservoir filled and water flowed over the spillway down the west branch.



Moorabool River upstream from Cooper's Bridge 21/9/08 taken on a PALM walk

Cameron began with a quote from the book by Kenneth Graham "The Wind in the Willows".

"The river" said Ratty "it's my world and I don't want any other, what it hasn't got is not worth having".

The Moorabool has the dubious status as one if not the most flow stressed river in Victoria. It is a long thin catchment starting up near the Korweinguboora Reservoir and flowing to the Barwon River. It is 194 km long. The two branches, east and west, join near Morrisons. It weaves its way through several municipalities and electorates and this has been one of the problems, it has been

difficult to get those who have the power to focus on the issues and to make decisions about environmental flows.

The lower reaches have been hard hit. The river used to run where Batesford Quarry is now, and as the quarry expanded the course has been changed twice. The quarry is 30 metres below sea level. A flow of over 8ML per day is required to make the river flow past the quarry. Concrete used as the base in one of the recourings and is now cracked and dangerous. After a big flow, fish are found stranded on the concrete. The second recouring is a channel that makes the river look like a drain and on a hot day the water is tepid.



Aerial photo of Batesford Quarry taken
13/6/06 on a flight over the Moorabool

In June this year pumping groundwater from the Batesford Quarry into the lower section of the Moorabool River and then into the Barwon River and its RAMSAR wetlands at Lake Connemare, commenced, this will deliver about 2,500 ML (megalitres) per annum into the river instead of Corio Bay near Geelong, which is where it was discharged in the past.

Cameron is a member of People for a Living Moorabool (PALM) a group of concerned people who either live along the river or have a strong attachment to it. They have been very active in raising awareness of the plight of the river all in a voluntary capacity. They have produced a DVD, lobbied, given talks, led tours, and generated numerous newspaper articles. The invitation to Maude Barlow Senior Advisor on Water to the President of the United Nations General Assembly, when she was in

Melbourne for a writer's festival, also raised the profile of the Moorabool River. Maude is a respected Canadian campaigner for water sustainability and justice and wrote the book, Blue Covenant.

The activities of PALM resulted in the group attaining a seat at the table with other groups interested in water entitlements. Eventually an environmental reserve of 25000ML was set aside for the river which is held by the Environmental Water Holder. This puts the river on equal footing with bulk other entitlements.

There are still challenging issues ahead for the catchment. With over 4000 farm and domestic dams already, does there need to be any more? The river needs to be capped, water needs to have a better pricing policy where if someone decides to fill a spa or water an English type garden, then it should cost more.

One of Cameron's comments during his talk about how we can trees up rivers but that they need to flow made me think how sometimes we do things because it seems the right thing to do but may lose sight of the bigger picture. For more than 15 years Landcare and other groups have been planting areas along the river but we may have lost sight that we were protecting a dying river. Luckily, there are other groups like PALM, concentrating on the water and it is flowing again.

Cameron finished his talk by saying that we need to breed memories if we want to keep the river. People need to have access and to be able to sit by the river as it clears the soul. More information may be found at http://bird.net.au/bird/index.php?title=Moorabool_River

Photographs and report - Elspeth Swan



Yarrowee Trail Tree Planting

Brown Hill

Sunday 16 October 2011

10.00 am - 3.00 pm

Our goal: 1500 plants in 5 hours

Whether you plant 1 or 100 we need your help



Contact: Andrew or Stephanie

Wattle Flat Pootilla Landcare Group

Parking: Hearn Street Park, Brown Hill

What to wear: • old clothes - long sleeves and trousers, coat and beanie if it's cold

• sturdy fully enclosed shoes (runners, gumboots or boots)

BYO: • gardening gloves, hammer

BBQ lunch: will be provided between 12.00 and 1.00pm

EXCURSION TO THE LINTON BLOCK.

Judging by the photos taken by Carol Hall, the August excursion to the Linton block was a very busy day. Trees were cleared, rabbit burrows dug out and plants admired. Thank you to those members who attended and so willingly 'lent a hand' (or shove), to help in the maintenance of our block.



Clearing Trees



John Gregurke on his knees - digging out a rabbit hole.



Left - Correa



Above - Acacia paradoxa
Left - Acacia genistifolia



A well deserved lunch break

4 Business Arising from Correspondence:

- Moth books have arrived; please pay Les \$13 per book.
- VVP – letter sent in support of biosphere establishment.

5 Reports

- Treasurer's Report: Opening balance \$5740.70 Income:\$70.70 Expenses: \$319.22 Balance \$5492.18 Moved Les Hanrahan Seconded Bill Murphy Carried.
- John Gregurke attended the City Council's Planning Panel for industrial areas around the airport; council keeps changing its mind about various zones including withdrawing areas. However there will be more pressure on Winter Swamp as there seems to be no concept of keeping a buffer zone around it.

6 General Business

- Blog progress – is being kept current by enthusiastic contributors; it caused the sale of one of our books!

7 Show & Tell/Field Reports

- *Specimen of Anchor Plant* – its thorny-ness makes you wonder how sheep would eat it!
- *John Gregurke*: 23-7-11 Lake Burrumbeet – Two new birds recorded, Australian Darter and Striated Field-wren, making total of 134 for that lake. Pair Flame Robins seen too.
- *Greg Binns*: 4-8-11 – Canadian Forest – male Scarlet Robin; Eastern Rosella; Magpie nestbuilding in Pleasant St.
- *Lorraine Powell*: 4-8-11 – Buninyong – Choughs, Grey Currawongs seen.
- *Bill Murphy*: at Dereel, Dwarf Greenhoods & Helmet Orchids in flower.
- *Elspeth Swan* – Crimson Rosellas seen in Sturt St, Ballarat. Mt Egerton cemetery: Beardheath, Pink Bells, Bulbine Lilies and Hardenbergia in flower.
- *Paul Norquay* – Crested Pigeons at home (Mt Egerton) over winter; Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos on Hakea and Casuarinas.
- *Carol Hall* 8-8-11 – Lake Wendouree – Darter drying wings at boatsheds opposite Pleasant St School.

8 Excursion Arrangements: Sunday August 7: Linton TFN Block (replaces scheduled outing), leader Les Hanrahan. Working bee – bring tools and protective clothing. If coming later in the day, lunch will be taken 12.30-1.30pm by the cars at the gateway entrance off Glenelg Highway 2km W of Linton.

9 Syllabus Item: Cameron Steele: *Bringing the Moorabool back from the brink.*

10 Supper

FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB OF BALLARAT INCORPORATED
No. A0014919P ABN 13 150 403 135
MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING - AUGUST 5, 2011

- 1 **Opening and Apologies.** The President welcomed 19 members & visitors.

Apologies: Chris & Anna Baulch, Helen Burgess, John Petheram, Mike Sorell, Elaine Gregurke, Margaret Martin, Genny Binns, Sue McLauchlan. Moved: Paul Norquay, Seconded: Denis Thurgood. Carried.

- 2 **Minutes of previous meeting** summarised & tabled in The Ballarat Naturalist. Moved: Bill Murphy, Seconded Greg Binns, Carried.

3 **Correspondence**

IN:

- Geelong Naturalist July & August 2011
- Bendigo FNC Whirrakee July 2011 / CFNC: Castlemaine Naturalist, July 2011.
- FNCV News August 2011 / Victorian Naturalist June 2011
- Loddon Shire promo re nature tourism festival in September-October
- Environment Victoria – Green Action News / Land for Wildlife June 2011
- Bendigo Bank Statement July 2011
- Notice re council adjustments concerning the Planning Panel hearing August 3 (John Gregurke)
- Email re Narmbool Forest Discovery Day – participation?
- Email request from Greens re a speaker
- Email from Vic Volcanic Plains re letter of support for biosphere listing
- Invoice from Entomological Society for 11 Moth books + postage
- Email re invitation to Ringwood FNC 50th anniversary dinner.
- Enquiry re membership and meetings from member of public.
- Email re planting day with Wattle Flat-Pootilla Landcare Grp along Yarrowee
- Email re notes about walks around Buninyong by Neil McCracken.
- CMA & Landcare Winter 2011; Landcare Awards 2011
- DSE – Fire Management Planning – plans available for public comment for Murray Goldfields district.
- City of Ballarat – Ballarat Planning Scheme Amendment 138 – Ballarat Rural Land Use Strategy – notice of info session 9th August Trench Room 4pm-7pm.
- City of Ballarat – Ballarat West Employment Zone Stakeholder Workshop 9th August 6pm-8pm Ballarat Golf Club.
- Request for copy of Discovering Ballarat's Bushland \$13 cheque enclosed; (result of blogsite!)

OUT:

- Email to Entomological Society re cost of postage for Moth book order - 11 books, total \$143.
- Email to Peter Marriott advising delay in our Moth payment until committee meeting/cheque signed.
- Email re meeting details to enquirer.

CALENDAR 2011

SEPTEMBER

- Fri 2 Inka Vertheim: Post-Graduate Student, University of Ballarat
Movement of Brolgas in SW Victoria
- Sat 3 *Pyrete Ranges*, John Gregurke, Club Member
- Tues 27 Committee Meeting, 7.30pm Pettet Close, Miners Rest

OCTOBER

- Fri 7 Ern Perkins OAM, Naturalist, *Broken Hill in the West Season*
- Sun 9 *Newstead*, Ern Perkins
- Sat 29 - Nov 4 **SEANA** Spring Camp at Phillip Island

Angair Wildflower Weekend at Anglesea

"Take care of the earth and
 she will take care of you."

Unknown author

Caladenia parva Photo courtesy Margaret MacDonald

24-25 September,
 Memorial Hall, 3 MacMillan St.
 Includes guided walks and bus tours.
 Entry fee \$5, Concession \$2, includes tours

Committee

President.....Ms Elspeth Swan
 Vice-President.....Mr Greg Binns
 SecretaryMrs Carol Hall
 TreasurerMr Les Hanrahan

Mrs Claire Dalman
 Mr Peter Dalman
 Dr Frances Hanrahan

Mr John Gregurke.....
 Mrs Val Hocking
 Ms Nina Netherway (editor)

Correspondence: PO Box 328W, Ballarat West, 3350

Email: Secretary:- Carol Hall,
 Editor: Nina Netherway,

Website: <http://fieldnatballarat.wordpress.com>

Meetings are held at the Primary Industries Training Centre, cnr Gillies and Gregory Sts,
 on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm..

Excursions: Leave from the carpark at the Primary Industries Training Centre, cnr Gillies
 and Gregory Sts.

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